

JOHN MCCAIN  
ARIZONA

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
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## United States Senate

December 18, 2013

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The Honorable Dan Ashe  
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Suite 330  
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Director Ashe:

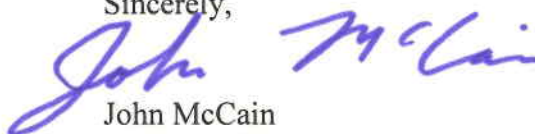
I am contacting you to request clarification regarding the recent announcement to terminate a 50-year sport fish stocking program at Willow Beach Hatchery in Arizona.

As you know, Willow Beach was established in 1959 with the sole purpose of raising rainbow trout for sport fishing. Trout stocking in the area has a notable economic impact on communities along the Lower Colorado River and has reportedly functioned as good business model for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for years. By the Service's own estimates, 150,000 trout planted each year in the Colorado River generate nearly half-million dollars in direct economic output, and the tax revenue generated by this economic engine reportedly exceeds the cost of operating the trout planting program.

I am aware of your agency's recent report titled "*2013 National Fish Hatchery System: Strategic Hatchery and Workforce Planning Report*" which signals project shifts for fisheries in the coming years. However, as part of this report, your agency claimed that no actual closures were expected until FY 2015 and that any such closures would be carefully weighed. I therefore ask that you clarify why Willow Beach will not have the benefit of this extra time that you intend to grant to every other hatchery across the nation. Eliminating the Willow Beach trout program that faces an engineering challenge without a review or economic justification does not keep with Service's stated intent to evaluate negative impacts of a closure.

I greatly appreciate your review of this matter and request that you respond to my office.

Sincerely,



John McCain  
United States Senator